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October 6, 2015

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“New York City has long been a global capital for film and television production, but today we are making an unprecedented commitment in the future of this industry and in New York’s finest young filmmakers,” said Mayor Bill de Blasio. “By opening the Feirstein School, we are unlocking the door of opportunity for a talented and diverse group of students who want to get the best, most cutting-edge education in cinema, and then put those skills to use right here in New York City. I thank former Mayor Michael Bloomberg for his extraordinary vision on this project and to the generous private funders who helped to make this first-of-its-kind school not only top-notch but highly affordable for a group of aspiring filmmakers who reflect the multicultural creativity of our city.”
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The Feirstein School is designed with the objective of providing affordable access to career opportunities in cinema, while simultaneously creating a pipeline of diverse talent that can work in the local film industry in New York City’s five boroughs. Announced in 2012, the project is funded through a public-private partnership model and reflects the City’s commitment to growing the already robust NYC film and television industry. The City of New York has invested a total of $8 million to support the creation of the Feirstein School and numerous scholarships so that more New Yorkers have the opportunity to pursue careers in film and television production. As part of the College’s commitment to affordability, the cost of tuition at Feirstein is approximately $59,000 for in-state students over three years, while the cost of comparable three-year MFA programs at private institutions can often exceed $150,000. Under the de Blasio administration, the City’s commitment to the Feirstein Graduate School of Cinema has
increased by 20 percent over initial investments. The City’s overall contribution includes $4.7 million for construction, $2 million for scholarships, $1 million for curriculum and programming, and $500,000 for creative grants and marketing.

Through the Mayor’s Office of Media and Entertainment, the City has worked closely with Brooklyn College in various aspects of the school’s development, including marketing and financing. The school is the result of an extensive public-private partnership involving the Brooklyn College Foundation, Mayor's Office of Media and Entertainment, Steiner Studios, New York City Council, the Brooklyn Borough President and the City University of New York.

The Feirstein School provides students with access to state-of-the-art production and post-production facilities in one of the largest sound stages in the country, as well as a full complement of lighting, grip and electrical equipment. Degree programs include M.A. in Cinema Studies and M.F.A in Cinema Arts, which is composed of five tracks: cinematography, directing, post production, producing and screenwriting.

Another hallmark of the school is the involvement of seasoned directors, producers, and actors, who contribute to the Feirstein’s advisory board and help to guide the school toward fulfilling its mission. Among them are actor, author, and director Ethan Hawke; director Steven Soderbergh; and Emmy Award-winning producer Celia Costas. Founding donors include Brooklyn College alumni Don Buchwald ’59, Roy Furman ’60, Jules Haimovitz ’71, and Michael Lynne ’61.

“The City of New York is committed to creating more opportunities for New Yorkers to access careers in our thriving production industry, which is why we’re supporting the Feirstein Graduate School of Cinema,” said Commissioner Cynthia López, Mayor’s Office of Media and Entertainment. “The Feirstein School will provide its students with an industry-driven – and affordable – education, and the scholarships we’ve established will mean New Yorkers for diverse backgrounds will be able to develop their talents and participate in meaningful industry opportunities, given the productions located at Steiner Studios.”

“Brooklyn College’s new Barry R. Feirstein Graduate School of Cinema at Steiner Studios is the only public graduate film school in the city and the only film school in the country located on a working studio lot,” said CUNY Chancellor James B. Milliken. “The Feirstein School will educate a diverse new generation of filmmakers in a city that boasts a $7 billion film industry, which employs more than 100,000 people and supports thousands of businesses. This innovative new school will serve students, the film industry and New York very well.”

“Brooklyn College provided an excellent academic foundation for me and I’m extremely pleased to return the favor by helping to build a 21st century cinema school that will both strengthen the college and provide access to exciting careers for today’s students,” said Barry R. Feirstein.

“The visionary philanthropy of Barry R. Feirstein, CUNY, the Mayor’s Office of Media and Entertainment, and the New York City and State Council, among others, has enabled us to transform the lives of our students,” said Brooklyn College President Karen L. Gould. “With instruction from faculty who are leaders in their fields, and hands on experience in a top notch facility, our students will be adequately prepared to succeed in the city’s burgeoning film industry.”
"We are simply elated to have the Feirstein Graduate School of Cinema here on the Steiner Studios lot," said **Douglas C. Steiner, Chairman of Steiner Studios.** "This co-location of academia and industry is cutting edge. Students are immersed in the real world thriving industry of film and television and being trained for the jobs of tomorrow. This is New York's future at its best."

"In Brooklyn, we are creating pipelines to prosperity in the 'pictures,' building on our 'Hollywood East' reputation to develop a full-fledged industry that trains and hires our own. I am proud to support Brooklyn College's brand-new Barry R. Feirstein Graduate School of Cinema, a wonderful addition to the CUNY system - of which I am a proud alum - and a one-of-a-kind opportunity to study filmmaking on a working film lot in New York City. I look forward to seeing the Emmys, Oscars, and other awards that this school's future grads will amass, along with the countless local jobs that will be created," said **Brooklyn Borough President Eric Adams.**

**Congresswoman Yvette Clark** said, "Brooklyn has historically been a center of culture in the United States and in the entire world, producing prominent filmmakers, actors, and screenwriters from Mel Brooks and Ruby Dee to Spike Lee and Noah Baumbach. With the opening of the Barry R. Feirstein Graduate School of Cinema at Brooklyn College - a college that has supported the aspirations of many generations of women and men - Brooklyn will have an institution where students have an opportunity to learn the techniques of filmmaking at an affordable cost, considerably less than at most private institutions. I commend Mayor Bill de Blasio, Commissioner Cynthia López of the Mayor's Office of Media and Entertainment, and the City University of New York for their commitment to the aspiring filmmakers in our community. I am certain that we will soon have the opportunity to experience the work of these talented filmmakers at the TriBeCa Film Festival, the Sundance Film Festival, and the Academy Awards."

"New York has a rich history as an epicenter for film and the arts and this school will help continue that tradition. By providing an affordable option for students interested in pursuing a career in film, the Brooklyn College Barry R. Feirstein Graduate School of Cinema will help cultivate the next generation of leaders in this industry," said **Congresswoman Nydia M. Velázquez.**

"Our thriving film industry means good jobs for New Yorkers with diverse education and skill levels," said **State Senator Daniel Squadron.** "We're lucky to have a successful film industry in the city, including here at Steiner. Giving more New Yorkers more access - especially affordable access - to cinema education is important to fostering the next generation of media, film and entertainment professionals in the city. Thank you to the City, CUNY, Steiner Studios, Barry R. Feirstein, and my colleagues in government."

**Council Member Stephen Levin** said "New York City is the heart and soul of the film industry and the iconic films and shows produced here are an indelible part of what makes our city the cultural capital of the world. The Feirstein School will give New Yorkers from all walks of life the chance to start fulfilling careers in this exciting and growing industry-students will have a chance to learn and work in a real industry setting and interact with some of New York's finest film talent. It's important that our public educational institutions give students the skills, training and experience to build their own success and this initiative is an innovative step in that direction. I have no doubt that we'll see great things from graduates of the Feirstein School."
Council Member Inez Barron, Chair of the Committee on Higher Education, said, “As Chair of the Committee on Higher Education, I am pleased to witness the opening of Brooklyn College’s Barry R. Feirstein School of Cinema. This School, the City’s first public graduate film school, has the distinct advantage of being integrated into a working film lot at Steiner Studio in the Brooklyn Navy Yard. The curriculum offerings in cinematography, directing, post production, producing and screenwriting will prepare its students to enter the world of cinema fully equipped to excel. I am confident that as this City University of New York program advances, it will receive stellar accolades, and join numerous other prestigious CUNY programs that have achieved national and international distinctions. The location of this School, abutting the NYCHA developments of Walt Whitman, Ingersoll (formerly known as Fort Greene) and Farragut Houses is also an opportunity to provide economic, educational and social benefits for the residents of this community. I look forward to these partnerships.”

“New York City is home to world class arts and culture, and today’s announcement shows that Mayor de Blasio and the New York City Council have a commitment to making sure that we have a talent base that is rooted in our City,” said Council Member Jimmy Van Bramer, Chair of the Committee on Cultural Affairs. “By investing $8 million in the Feirstein School, students will have access to state-of-the-art production and post-production facilities in one of the largest sound stages in the country. Congratulations to Mayor Bill de Blasio and Commissioner López on this tremendous achievement.”

Council Member Robert E. Cornegy, Jr. said, “As the Council Member who fought for the creation of “Do The Right Thing Way,” I understand that film is a powerful way to represent and shape culture, while also creating economic opportunities that ripple out into the community. It’s wonderful that Brooklyn will now have a homegrown, experiential program to nurture the cinematic talent that exists in our borough and our city.”

“The Barry R. Feirstein Graduate School of Cinema is an incredible opportunity to develop future directors, cinematographers, producers, and screenwriters by providing students with a high-quality, affordable education and real-time experience on the lot of Steiner Studios. Through the ongoing support of public-private partners, this School will help change the face of the industry by promoting diversity and inclusion. As a Member of the New York City Council Committee on Higher Education, I look forward to the growth of this School and its vital role in bolstering film and TV production within the City of New York,” said Council Member Laurie A. Cumbo.

“New York City is home to the world’s leading film industry, and as a former film production minor at Brooklyn College, I could not be more proud to see my alma mater provide an even greater opportunity to those thriving to break into the biz. I look forward to hearing the first Oscar acceptance speech from a Feirstein Graduate School alumni in the years to come,” said Council Member Jumaane D. Williams.

“The Feirstein Graduate School of Cinema at Steiner Studios represents a tremendous opportunity for a broad range of students to gain access to the growing film and media sectors,” said Brooklyn Navy Yard Development Corporation’s President & CEO David Ehrenberg. “We are thrilled that Steiner and CUNY have chosen to locate this groundbreaking program within the Yard, a program that will further enhance our mission of creating middle
class jobs while providing unparalleled access to these opportunities for New Yorkers."

Dr. Barbara Bowen, President of the Professional Staff Congress, the union that represents CUNY's 27,000 faculty and academic staff, said, "Thank you, Mayor de Blasio, for keeping your promise of support for the new Barry R. Feirstein Graduate School of Cinema Studies at Brooklyn College, and congratulations to the faculty, staff and students of Brooklyn College who have made the School possible. New York City is of course the perfect place to explore and contribute to new directions in cinema, and a public university is exactly the right place to study cinema, among the most democratic of the arts. CUNY has long been rich in pathbreaking film scholars and practitioners; it is a great pleasure to be able to welcome the new School."

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New Human Ancestor Walked Like Us, Climbed Like an Ape

Strong hands and shock-resistant wrists gave the ancient human Homo naledi an advantage over ape cousins.

By Nadia Drake, National Geographic
PUBLISHED OCTOBER 06, 2015

The mysterious human ancestor called Homo naledi was primed for success in a prehistoric triathlon, new research shows—if the challenges were walking upright, climbing trees, and handily wielding tools.

Based on fossils retrieved from South Africa's Rising Star cave, two teams reconstructed the locomotor habits of Homo naledi, reported Tuesday in Nature Communications. With funding from National Geographic, one took a close look at 107 foot bones, the other at 26 bones from a nearly complete right hand.

(Read about the recent discovery of Homo naledi)
In most respects, the *H. naledi* foot looks surprisingly like a modern human’s. Its ankle joint, parallel big toe and wide heel bone belong to a striding biped, a creature fully adapted to efficiently walking upright on two legs. But its lower arch and curved toe bones are more ape-like.

The hand, with its curved fingers, indicates that *H. naledi* were strong climbers—and yet the long, strong thumb and shock-absorbing wrist could also have been capable of manipulating tools (though no tools have been found yet).

*(Read Human Evolution 101.)*

It’s a mix of features scientists hadn’t seen clearly yet in the genus *Homo*, to which modern humans belong, particularly when it comes to *H. naledi*’s pronounced arboreal proclivities.

“*H. naledi* had a unique form of locomotion for a member of the genus *Homo,*” says study author William Harcourt-Smith of CUNY’s Lehman College.

**Why It Matters**

When, in the course of human evolution, did our ancestors climb down from the trees and begin striding across the land?

It’s hard to say. Lucy and other very early human ancestors, known as australopithecines, walked upright at least four million years ago, yet were certainly climbers and may have also been using stone tools.

But evidence for tree-climbing within the *Homo* lineage is scarce. Scientists suspect that *Homo habilis*, the “handy man,” may have retained climbing abilities around two million years ago—but that view is based on just a few fragmentary fossils. Now, the hands of *H. naledi* tell us that
despite its incredibly modern foot and striding gait, the species also retained ape-like tree-climbing abilities.

For most of human evolution, our ancestors mixed walking and climbing prowess, and this was part of what made them so successful at adapting to change, says Stony Brook University’s Bill Jungers. “*H. naledi* is no exception.”

**The Big Picture**

Because the bones from Rising Star have yet to be dated, it’s still not clear where *H. naledi* fits into the bigger picture of human evolution. Based on its morphology alone, it appears to be near the base of the *Homo* genus. If *H. naledi* is that old—around 2 or 2.5 million years—this would mean some features in the hand facilitating tool-use appeared earlier than scientists thought, says study author Tracy Kivell of the University of Kent.

If, on the other hand, *H. naledi* ends up being relatively perhaps 100,000 years old—then primitive characteristics, like curved fingers, were retained (or developed independently) in a hominin that co-existed with modern humans. “Both scenarios are very interesting,” Kivell says.

*Follow Nadia Drake on Twitter and read her National Geographic Phenomena blog.*
Five reasons New York's Chinatown is surviving gentrification scourge

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Nick Tabor

Property ownership, enduring community ties, fresh immigration from China, and being a dining destination have helped Chinatown survive when others have succumbed to development, writes Nick Tabor

Every summer, Wellington Chen, director of New York Chinatown's Business Improvement District, dispatches interns to document all the businesses that have opened or closed in his neighbourhood. He has noticed an overwhelming number of empty storefronts being filled by independent pharmacies. At the same time, senior and adult day-care centres have been proliferating.

Chen says it's a subtle indication of a trend: as so many immigrants' children have left for college and never returned, and as other families have sought real estate in the outer boroughs (particularly in Sunset Park, Brooklyn and Flushing, Queens), most of the people left in Chinatown's historic core are the elderly dwellers of rent-regulated apartments.

See also: Before it's too late: Hong Kong author documents Chinese in Cuba

How can this possibly be the state of one of the most desirable tracts of real estate in all of Manhattan? After all, Chinatown is hedged in by three of the borough's priciest neighbourhoods: SoHo to the north, the Financial District to the south and, to the west, TriBeCa, where the average rent for a one-bedroom apartment is US$5,100. Developers would eagerly replace Chinatown's tenement buildings with market-rate housing for young professionals or gut the existing buildings, leaving only the tea parlours and dumpling shacks.

A similar fate has already befallen the Chinatowns of Chicago, Boston, Philadelphia and Washington, which have been reduced to ethnic theme parks where long-time residents have been priced out and new immigrants no longer come. And Manhattan's Chinatown is built on the graveyards of enclaves past: the Irish Five Points, the Jewish Lower East Side and Little Italy.

But Chen is right: so far, Manhattan's Chinatown has largely resisted the laws of the real-estate market. Often defined by the rough borders of Delancey and Chambers streets on the north and south, and East Broadway and Broadway to the east and west, the neighbourhood is still populated primarily by low-income Chinese, its storefronts are still dominated by Chinese mom-and-pop operations, and it remains a cultural and commercial hub even for expats in the outer boroughs. It has found ways to keep its internal economy humming even after its garment factories folded in the 1990s and early 2000s.

While the neighbourhood is not immune to pressures - some restaurants are shuttering
because of rent hikes, hotels and luxury apartments are appearing on the periphery, and wealthier tenants are slowly filling vacancies in some of the old buildings - it is, broadly speaking, an exceptionally tight-knit and self-sustaining city unto itself.

Chinatown circa 1940.

Here are five reasons why:

1 They own the place

Eric Ng is known to practically every long-time resident as "the mayor of Chinatown". An entrepreneur who emigrated from Hong Kong in 1970, he was re-elected last year as president of the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association (CCBA), which represents the interests of some five dozen cultural organisations and "family associations", grouped by immigrants' last names. For decades, the CCBA effectively functioned as Chinatown's government, collecting dues and overseeing business transactions.

"If there was an argument, they didn't come to court," Ng says in his office at 62 Mott Street. "They came to us."

The most powerful community figures worked through the CCBA. As Chen says, "There are people behind the scenes who choose the Eric Ngs of this world." Those figures once functioned like a village council, providing stability and order. They're still around, and most are businessmen, many retired, some now living in the outer boroughs. But they no longer carry the authority they once did.

See also: Mural outrage: vandalism in Vancouver's Chinatown [2]

Still, the family associations' most enduring achievement is a momentous one. During the
1960s and 70s, they bought up about 60 buildings in Chinatown's historic core, mostly on Mott, Pell and Bayard streets, which they still own collectively. They rent out the bottom floors to stores and restaurants, and the rest they use as apartments, many for the elderly. They also retain community space, which they use for huge galas during Lunar New Year.

"They're sitting on a gold mine," says Margaret Chin, the city council member representing Lower Manhattan who was born in Hong Kong and grew up in Chinatown.

A similar mixed-use building on East Broadway, previously owned by a realty company, sold last year for US$20 million. But because dozens of people have shares in the family associations' buildings, they're almost impossible to sell.

Dwarfing the family associations in scale are the government-subsidised housing developments clustered around Chinatown's far-eastern edge. The Smith and Vladeck public-housing projects are just beyond Chinatown's traditional borders, but they now collectively house some 2,700 low-income Asian residents. And there are hundreds more in the Confucius Plaza skyscraper on Bowery and in the Two Bridges projects on Cherry Street.

All of this has helped create the conditions for a haven for poor immigrants, but the efforts of liberal charities are also critical to keeping it that way. The civil-rights group Asian Americans for Equality (AAFE), run by Christopher Kui, is one of the most powerful forces in Chinatown's housing market. Since 1995, it has secured more than US$100 million in grants, donations and loans to buy tenement buildings and restore them - ensuring that developers can't raze them instead - and to build affordable housing. It also joins other advocacy groups, such as the Chinese Staff and Workers' Association and CAAAV (formerly called Committee Against Anti-Asian Violence), in protecting residents of rent-regulated buildings, filing lawsuits on their behalf when landlords try to evict them illegally.

"We're talking about fighting building by building - it's a little bit like Groundhog Day," says Paul Leonard, who works in Chin's office. "One tenant will give word that they're getting harassed by
their landlord and it will turn into an attempt to clear the entire building."

In their totality, these little struggles keep Chinatown's affordable-housing stock from eroding.

Chin, who is the district's first Chinese-American city council member, helped found AAIFE and worked there for 11 years. When I ask her why these advocacy groups hold so much sway in Chinatown, she chalks it up to simple logistics.

"The area is not that big," she says. "It's all right there. You're able to speak the language and organise."

Women at work in a garment factory in Chinatown, in 1981.

2 No one ever truly leaves

Ethnic bonds are also responsible for the neighbourhood's economic resilience in the wake of the garment industry's collapse. During the '70s and '80s, clothing manufacturers provided tens of thousands of jobs to uneducated workers, and employees on the late shift kept the surrounding restaurants and markets buzzing until long past midnight. By the early 2000s, thanks to competition from overseas labour and the restricted access to Chinatown in the wake of 9/11, nearly all the factories had closed. At this point, Flushing was attracting middle-class families looking to buy houses, and Sunset Park was appealing to tenants who couldn't find space in Manhattan. It appeared possible that the original Chinatown would no longer be an essential part of their daily life.

But over the past decade, as other Chinese businesses keep people returning for day trips, Chinatown's contemporary role has come into focus. Neighbourhood banks such as Abacus and Eastbank still cater to Chinese immigrants looking to buy homes and start businesses. Sandra K. Lee, chief executive of Harold L Lee & Sons Insurance, on Pell Street, says her office helps newcomers understand how insurance works and why it's necessary in the litigious American culture, even if they never needed it in Hong Kong or Taiwan.
"It's sort of like social work," she says.

The Lau-Kee family built its law firm on immigration cases in the 1960s and now concentrates on business and real-estate law for Chinese clients. Sunset Park and Flushing have their own Chinese food markets and restaurants but, Chin says, the high concentration of accountants, real-estate agents and doctors - not to mention the old churches and Buddhist temples - keep Chinatown a regional capital for Chinese immigrants.

3 And more keep coming

Since the early '90s, a distinct and parallel Chinese community has blossomed in the neighbourhood. Unlike the primarily middle-class Cantonese-speaking immigrants who moved to Chinatown in the '60s and '70s from Hong Kong, the newcomers are arriving from the farms and fishing villages in Fujian province, where Putonghua is dominant. Two dozen employment agencies on East Broadway have networked with Chinese restaurants across the eastern half of the United States, so a young Fujianese immigrant with no working papers, knowledge of English or cooking experience can walk in and immediately land a kitchen job in some distant locale.

To transport them, there are now numerous Fujianese bus companies that make regular trips to cities such as St Paul, in Minnesota, and Norfolk, in Virginia. With a capacity of more than 1,000 people a day, they have expanded their clientele outside the neighbourhood, transforming Chinatown into a transport hub. In addition, there are now at least nine Chinatown print shops that supply menus for Fujianese-owned restaurants in other states; a Chinatown electronics store that supplies the restaurants with software and hardware; and a host of support services that cater to these transient Fujianese workers: money lenders, gambling facilities, wedding parlours, notaries and immigration-law offices.

"Chinatown has reinvented itself," says Peter Kwong, a professor at Hunter College and City University of New York who is recognised by many as the dean of Chinatown scholars. "That's why it's still here."
Wo Hop, which opened in 1938, has stayed in business by adapting its menu for non-Asian palates.

"The Chinese immigrants from Hong Kong, they won't eat here," says Ming Huang, who manages the restaurant on his family's behalf. "But the ABCs - American-born Chinese - they like our style of food."

5 It is engaged in an argument with itself

Neighbourhood leaders from every sector agree that they need to orchestrate some kind of change to keep Chinatown thriving, but prescriptions vary widely. There are those who want disruption. Some of the developers most active on the neighbourhood's periphery belong to the Chinatown community, including Alexander Chu, chairman of Eastbank, who has drawn criticism for the boutique hotel he's building in the area. Another developer, Shing Wah Yeung, opened a luxury-condo building on the periphery in 2006, and earlier this year he announced plans to build a 13-storey tower of office condos and retail space at Pike Street and East Broadway, in the south of Chinatown.

Others see the neighbourhood's best future as a continuation of the past.

"It's the spirit of old New York," says Tchen. "A port culture of people coming on, coming off ships and intermingling with people of different backgrounds. The neighbourhood still embodies that history of just regular people."

Some believe the best way to retain regular people is to agitate against development. Wing Lam, head of the Chinese Staff and Workers' Association, is pushing the city to pass a rezoning plan that would require about half the units in any new building to be affordable, limit building height and grant special protections to small businesses. He plans to demonstrate in front of City Hall. The promotional fliers read, "No More High Rents, No More Displacement, Rezoning NOW!"

As newcomers, the Fujianese typically have less investment in preserving the neighbourhood's old character, so many of them support the building of mixed-rate high-rises in order to increase the overall supply of housing.

"Let the people grow up," says Jimmy Cheng, president of the United Fujianese American Association, as he lifts his hand to suggest a vertiginous height, "and make their money."

This kind of debate over growth is taking place all over New York. What makes Chinatown's future distinct from, say, that of Little Italy, is the degree to which gentrification can be controlled by the ethnic group that runs the neighbourhood. Chinatown's future may not resemble the Chinatown we know today, but it will probably be hashed out among the Chinese-American residents currently living, eating, shopping and praying there.

"Chinatown will always be here," Chin says. "It's just a question of what kind of Chinatown we want."
Victims Of September G Train Derailment Are Suing For $2 Million Each

Two women who were riding the G train that derailed just outside of the Hoyt-Schermerhorn station last month have filed a lawsuit against the City, blaming their injuries on an ongoing stalemate between the MTA and Mayor de Blasio over the transit authority's yawning $14 billion deficit.

While the city owns the subway tracks, a spokesman for the City's legal office stressed that the MTA would likely pay any damages for alleged negligence in track maintenance.

The News reports that Shonta McLeod, a 23-year-old student at LaGuardia Community College, and 34-year-old Nicole Knight, who was riding the train with her 3-day-old infant, are both asking for $2 million in damages.

According to the tabloid, Knight is alleging that her back slammed against her seat during the derailment, causing her neck to snap backwards. Her attorney told us that she is awaiting a final diagnosis of her injuries, but that some of them are "internal."

Another straphanger on the ill-fated G noted Knight's discomfort that night, telling us that "a woman with a Chipotle burrito-sized newborn baby was understandably upset, especially as it got hotter."

"We're suing because the maintenance that has not been done in these subway tunnels creates a danger for the customers of this city," said attorney Sanford Rubenstein in a statement. "The public should not be held hostage because of a feud between the MTA and City Hall."

The derailment took place around 10:30 p.m. on September 10th. According to authorities, the front axle of the train's front car went off of the tracks about 700 feet north of Hoyt-Schermerhorn.
The crash was later attributed to a crumbling, deteriorating wall in the tunnel, information that MTA Chairman Thomas Prendergast highlighted in public remarks about what he deemed the City's refusal to pony up.

"Our 2015-19 Capital Program allocates $927.5 million for repairing and rebuilding subway line structures, including bench walls such as the one involved in last night's derailment," he said in a statement. "I am tired of writing letters to City officials that result only in vague calls for more conversations."

MTA spokesman Adam Lisberg declined to comment on the ongoing case, but directed us to a line in Prendergast's statement that shoulders responsibility for the derailment—"Make no mistake: The Metropolitan Transportation Authority is fully responsible for the safe and reliable operation of the New York region's mass transit system, and an incident of this magnitude is unacceptable."

In response to the lawsuit, City spokesman Nick Paolucci said that the responsibility for funding the MTA lies not with Mayor de Blasio, but rather with the State.

"It's irresponsible to play politics with people's lives, and the State should not be recruiting surrogates to attack the City when such serious issues are at stake," Paolucci said. "The City stands ready and willing to have a comprehensive conversation on the future of this vital State authority, and we look forward to understanding where the promised State funding will come from."

Contact the author of this article or email tips@gothamist.com with further questions, comments or tips.
City to Staten Island women: Did you forget your birth control?

STATEN ISLAND, N.Y. -- The city Health Department has a question for Staten Island women: Did you forget your birth control?

In its new ad campaign, the Health Department addresses the borough's female population in a new poster: "You spent the night in Brooklyn. But you left your birth control in Staten Island. Maybe the IUD is right for you."

The ad suggests that an IUD (intrauterine device) may be a better alternative than the birth control pill for some women.
The ad is one of several that are part of the city Health Department's "Maybe the IUD" campaign to increase awareness of the device as a highly effective, low-maintenance birth control option.

"The poster underscores the convenience of having an IUD," said Carolina Rodriguez, a Health Department spokeswoman. "This is a common situation. You may be spending a night in another borough. It's just a whimsical way to get the message across."

The campaign, which will include subway and online ads, social media, print materials and a website, provides information about a full range of birth control, and stresses the importance of getting accurate information about contraceptive options.

Campaign materials also recognize the importance of using condoms to prevent sexually transmitted infections, including HIV.

"All women, regardless of life circumstances or ability to pay, have the right to make informed choices about their reproductive health and act on those choices by receiving accurate information and easy access to the full range of birth control options," said Health Commissioner Dr. Mary T. Bassett.

"As part of our five-year campaign, the Health Department will partner with community organizations to elevate the conversation around sexual and reproductive justice in New York City. This will be the first time a municipal health department has done this, and I'm proud that we are leading the way."

The Health Department is partnering with the City University of New York (CUNY) on this campaign. CUNY is a key partner in reaching young adults who often have limited access to sexual and reproductive health care information and services.
Study says city's racial achievement gap gets worse in college

By Carl Campanile

The racial achievement gap among New York City public-school students gets worse once they reach college, according to a new study.

An analysis released Tuesday by Families for Excellent Schools, a pro-charter group, says only 12.7 percent of this year's African-American high-school freshmen and only 12.1 percent of Hispanics will end up with four-year bachelor's degrees.

The organization, which said it based its conclusions on public data, put the comparable rate for whites at 37.5...
Jennifer Hudson to join parents' fight against school injustice

percent and Asians at 40.4 percent.

The sharp racial and ethnic gap was even more pronounced than in the city's public schools.

De Blasio keeps on snubbing charter schools

The Department of Education reported that 63.8 percent of blacks, 61.4 percent of Hispanics, 80.7 percent of whites and 82.6 percent of Asians graduated high schools in 2014.

That put the achievement difference between whites and Hispanics, for instance, at 20 percentage points in high schools. In college it was 25 percentage points, according to the analysis.

"The data lays bare the devastating costs of education inequality in this city. When half a million children — almost all of color — are trapped in failed schools, doors to the middle class are slammed shut and $4.4 billion in wages is lost," said Jeremiah Kittredge, the organization's CEO.

Closing the achievement divide would put more than 10,000 workers into jobs and transform neighborhoods, according to the study.

The de Blasio administration slammed the study as flawed.

"This report uses several different incomplete data sets representing different students and cohorts showing a misleading and inaccurate prediction," said DOE spokeswoman Devora Kaye.

The report was released as charter-school parents and students prepared to rally Wednesday in downtown Brooklyn and at City Hall to urge Mayor de Blasio to provide more charter options.
To Revoke or Not: Colleges That Gave Cosby Honors Face a Tough Question

By SYDNEY EMBER and COLIN MOYNIHAN  OCT. 6, 2015

Every spring for decades, a similar scene played out at colleges across the United States: Students picked up their degrees — and Bill Cosby stood alongside them.

Schools wanted Mr. Cosby, the popular, education-embracing comedian, to give their commencement address and he routinely showed up, often in a school sweatshirt, offering high fives, hugs and homespun advice. In exchange, universities and colleges gave him honorary degrees in categories like education, public service and law.

Few people in American history have been recognized by universities as often as Mr. Cosby, whose publicist once estimated that the entertainer had collected more than 100 honorary degrees. The New York Times, in a quick search, found nearly 60.

But now, as dozens of women have come forward to accuse Mr. Cosby of sexual assault, colleges across the country are confronting the question of what to do when someone who has been honored falls from grace.

Some are sticking with longstanding policies that prohibit the revocation of such awards. Some are still debating what to do. And some are rescinding Mr. Cosby’s degrees.
Fordham, Marquette, Brown and the University of San Francisco all announced in the last two weeks that they were revoking the honor they bestowed on Mr. Cosby.

“It has become clear,” Christina Paxson, the president of Brown, said in her statement that “by his own admission in legal depositions that became public this summer, that Mr. Cosby has engaged in conduct with women that is contrary to the values of Brown and the qualities for which he was honored by the university in 1985.”

But Yale is among the schools that have taken a completely different approach — no action, even in the face of an online petition to strike the award given in 2003.

“Revoking Cosby’s doctorate is about more than achieving justice for his victims,” Marissa Medansky, a recent graduate who started the petition, wrote in The Yale Daily News last month. “It is a gesture, however small, against sexual violence wherever these heinous crimes occur — including at Yale and other college campuses.”

Yale said in a statement that it has never rescinded an honorary degree, without elaborating on its reasoning.

Some schools say they do not want to condemn in the court of public opinion a man who has never been found guilty in a court of law, or even charged with a crime. Mr. Cosby has denied all wrongdoing.

“We give out honorary degrees based on what we know at the time,” said Kimberly Alexander, vice president for institutional advancement at Talladega College in Alabama where Mr. Cosby was honored in 1992, “and at the time he was everybody’s favorite dad.”

Still others are still grappling with what to do, like Ohio State University, which bestowed its award on Mr. Cosby in 2001; the John Jay College of Criminal Justice in New York City (1995); the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (2003); and the Fashion Institute of Technology (2000).

Jeremy Travis, the president of John Jay, said a proposal to rescind Mr. Cosby’s degree was “under very active consideration at the moment.”
“What makes the case compelling” he said in a phone interview, “is the very serious pattern of misconduct that’s been revealed both in journalistic accounts and by a large number of women who have now bravely come forward and has been validated by Mr. Cosby’s own testimony in deposition about his pattern of conduct.”

For schools, honorary degrees are a way to reward well-respected individuals, draw attendance by celebrities and perhaps generate a financial gift. Revoking them is an administrative formality and public rebuke.

Mr. Cosby is clearly in a top tier of people whose tally of such awards is impressive, but he is not the record-holder. According to the Guinness World Records, the person who collected the most honorary degrees is King Bhumipol of Thailand with 136. But the University of Notre Dame said its former president, the Rev. Theodore M. Hesburgh, had received 150. (Notre Dame awarded Mr. Cosby an honorary degree in 1990 and also has a policy of not rescinding such awards.)

Mr. Cosby has taken in at least 57 such degrees since 1985. He received them from every kind of school from the very big, like the University of Southern California, to smaller schools like Berklee College of Music in Boston. Several of Mr. Cosby’s honorary degrees came from historically black colleges, including Delaware State University, Fisk University in Nashville and Dillard University in New Orleans, which bestowed its honor in 2006, during its first commencement after Hurricane Katrina.

Typically the schools honored Mr. Cosby for his success as an entertainer, as well as his pronounced support for education and his espousal of the sort of bootstraps perseverance that would serve young graduates well.

“As an actor, a humorist, and a citizen, Bill Cosby has been one of America’s most eloquent advocates for education and the value of developing every individual mind,” Carnegie Mellon’s president, Jared L. Cohon, said in 2007 when Mr. Cosby received his degree.

Mr. Cosby said in an interview with The Times in 1998: “I like to see these fresh, wet faces going out into the world. Other than at church or a wedding you don’t see people like this. It’s a getting for me, but it’s also a giving. It’s a spiritual experience.”
A spokesman for Mr. Cosby, David Brokaw, declined to discuss the issue of his honorary degrees.

Schools began distancing themselves from Mr. Cosby months ago, including his alma mater, Temple University, which accepted his resignation from the board in December and Spelman College, a historically black women's college in Atlanta that in July terminated a professorship endowed by Mr. Cosby.

The recent wave of schools rescinding Mr. Cosby's honorary degrees has only resurrected the issue, particularly at schools where administration policies have fallen under scrutiny in recent years for their handling of sexual assault.

Mr. Cosby is far from the first honorary degree recipient who has held onto his award despite subsequent intense criticism. DePauw University in Indiana, for example, has not rescinded the honorary degree it awarded Richard M. Nixon in 1957, years before his role in Watergate. Morehouse College in Atlanta has similarly not rescinded a 1983 honorary degree it gave Robert Mugabe, the president of Zimbabwe who has a much criticized record on human rights.

But as many schools point out, honorary degrees are not Nobel Prizes. And many students on college campuses today are often barely familiar with past honorees. That is certainly true of Mr. Cosby, who received some of his awards decades ago, before some current students were even born.

"We're not even thinking about Bill Cosby," said Edwina Harris Hamby, vice president for institutional advancement at Fisk. "Most of the students now don't even know who Bill Cosby is unless they look at Netflix or something like that."

**Has Your Alma Mater Given Cosby a Degree?**

American colleges and universities have routinely awarded honorary degrees to Bill Cosby, as evident in this partial list of nearly 60. Some of these schools are grappling with whether to rescind the honor. Others already have. And many say they have never rescinded an honorary degree and would not change the policy in Mr. Cosby's case.
Baylor University
Berklee College of Music
Boston College
Boston University
Brown University
Bryant College
Carnegie Mellon University
Colby College
Colgate University
College of William and Mary
Cooper Union
Delaware State University
Dillard University
Drew University
Drexel University
Fashion Institute of Technology
Fisk University
Fordham University
George Washington University
Hampton University
Haverford College
Howard University
John Jay College of Criminal Justice
Johns Hopkins University
Marquette University
New York University
North Carolina A&T State University
Northwestern University
Oberlin College
Ohio State University
Old Dominion University
Paine College
Pepperdine University
Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute
Rust College
Spelman College
Springfield College
Swarthmore College
Talladega College
Temple University
Tufts University
University of Cincinnati
University of Connecticut
University of Maryland
University of Massachusetts, Amherst
University of Notre Dame
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
University of Pennsylvania
University of Pittsburgh
University of San Francisco
University of South Carolina
University of Southern California
Virginia Commonwealth University
Wesleyan University
West Chester University
Wilkes University
Yale University

Correction: October 7, 2015
Because of an editing error, an earlier version of this article misstated the year Bill Cosby was awarded an honorary degree by the University of Notre Dame. It was 1990, not 1980.
2015 Students of Parents with Disabilities Scholarship Winners Announced

The National Center for Parents with Disabilities and their Families at Through the Looking Glass announced the sixteen winners of its 2015 College Scholarships for Students of Parents with Disabilities. Scholarships have been awarded to the following students: Annika Ariel (hometown: Santa Rosa, CA; attending Amherst College); Miriah Burns (S. Yarmouth, MA; University of North Carolina School of the Arts); Kerry DeBruce (Far Rockaway, NY; University at Albany SUNY); Raychelle King (Lakewood, OH; Ursuline College); Amelia Kirkhorn (Eau Claire, WI; University of Minnesota, Twin Cities); Jazmin Luperena (Brooklyn, NY; Hunter College); Sean McCartney (Youngstown, OH; Youngstown State University); Anastasia Monoyos (Commack, NY; Sacred Heart University); Krista Morgan (Venice, FL; New York University); Robert Newman (Juneau, AK; Boston Conservatory); Breana Ramsey (Kenner, LA; Louisiana State University); Nidirah Stephens (San Bernardino, CA; UCLA); Naomi Tsai (Portland, OR; Colorado College); Caroline Twining (Sherborn, MA; Clark University); Addison Vergara (Greeley, CO; Carroll College); and Allison Wendlberger (San Mateo, CA; University of California, Merced).

BERKELEY, CA (PRWEB) OCTOBER 07, 2015

The National Center for Parents with Disabilities and their Families at Through the Looking Glass announced the sixteen winners of its 2015 College Scholarships for Students of Parents with Disabilities. Over 400 students from across the U.S. applied for these scholarships. Scholarship winners include those whose mother or father has a disability as well as those families in which both parents have disabilities.

Each award is a $1,000 college scholarship for an outstanding high school senior or college student who has at least one parent with a
disability. Selection criteria included academic performance, community service, letters of recommendation and an essay describing the experience of growing up with a parent with a disability. Students applying for these scholarships included those with parents who were quadriplegic, blind, deaf, amputees, as well as parents with spinal cord injury, cancer, multiple sclerosis, diabetes, mental illness, ALS, HIV/AIDS, traumatic brain injury, muscular dystrophy or intellectual disability. As one of several projects of the National Center, these scholarships are primarily funded through the National Institute on Disability, Independent Living and Rehabilitation Research (NIDILRR) (Grant #90DP0014). NIDILRR is a Center within the Administration for Community Living, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Scholarships have been awarded to the following students: Annika Ariel (hometown: Santa Rosa, CA; attending Amherst College); Miriah Burns (S. Yarmouth, MA; University of North Carolina School of the Arts); Kerry DeBruce (Far Rockaway, NY; University at Albany SUNY); Raychelle King (Lakewood, OH; Ursuline College); Amelia Kirkhorn (Eau Claire, WI; University of Minnesota, Twin Cities); Jazmin Luperena (Brooklyn, NY; Hunter College); Sean McCartney (Youngstown, OH; Youngstown State University); Anastasia Monoyos (Commack, NY; Sacred Heart University); Krista Morgan (Venice, FL; New York University); Robert Newman (Juneau, AK; Boston Conservatory); Breana Ramsey (Kenner, LA; Louisiana State University); Nidirah Stephens (San Bernardino, CA; UCLA); Naomi Tsai (Portland, OR; Colorado College); Caroline Twining (Sherborn, MA; Clark University); Addison Vergara (Greeley, CO; Carroll College); and Allison Wendleberger (San Mateo, CA; University of California, Merced). The complete winning essays can be found on our website: http://www.lookingglass.org.

In their essays, the winning students describe the routine, remarkable and sometimes difficult stories of parents with disabilities and their children. Despite the wide variation in parental disability and other demographic features among scholarship applicants, several consistent themes emerged that have been documented over the years by Through the Looking Glass in national research studies: the normalcy of growing up with a parent with a disability; and the resilience and strength of these families despite social and financial obstacles.

There are almost no scholarships for the hundreds of thousands of students who have parents with significant disabilities or medical conditions. These awards not only recognize the diversity and contributions of these families, but their financial need. U.S. families with a disabled parent are twice as likely to be below the poverty level than are families with non-disabled parents. In addition, standard college financial aid applications do not typically weigh the considerable medical or specialized equipment expenses that many parents with disabilities incur. These expenses can substantially reduce the family income by tens of thousands of dollars each year. Most of the hundreds of essays submitted for these scholarships underscore the need for increased resources and accommodations for parents with disabilities and their families throughout the U.S. Despite some progress, parents with disabilities and their families remain largely invisible in the larger society and are often left to fend for themselves with inadequate and inaccessible resources. For many families, their best and only resources are the family members themselves.

Through the Looking Glass

It is so hard to simply sum up how a disabled parent has changed me in only three pages. It has completely changed my life in so many more ways than anyone can imagine.
A new round of scholarship applications will be announced on Through the Looking Glass’ website http://www.lookingglass.org in January 2016. Also, anyone wishing to contribute to this Scholarship Fund may make a donation on our website or mail to “Through the Looking Glass,” and indicate that this is for the Scholarship Fund. Mail to: Through the Looking Glass, 3075 Adeline Street #120, Berkeley, CA 94703 or call (800) 644-2666.

About Through the Looking Glass

Founded in 1982, Through the Looking Glass (TLG) is a nationally recognized center that has pioneered research, training, and services for families in which a child, parent or grandparent has a disability. In 1998, TLG was funded by NIDRR as the first National Center for Parents with Disabilities and their Families. In October 2011, TLG was awarded a five year grant by NIDRR to continue our national work with parents with disabilities and their families. Under this funding, TLG is conducting several national research projects that increase the knowledge about children and parents with disabilities and their families as well as provide critically needed data to inform local, regional, and national policies. The National Center continues TLG’s overall mission of empowering parents and potential parents with disabilities by disseminating disability-appropriate information regarding parenting to parents, disability advocates, and legal, medical, intervention and social services providers. The Center’s overall goal is to increase information and support more disability-appropriate resources for parents with disabilities and their children throughout the U.S. TLG is one of seven partner disability organizations that created the Ed Roberts Campus (http://www.edrobertscampus.org) a national and international model dedicated to disability rights and universal access.

Through the Looking Glass
3075 Adeline Street, Suite 120
Berkeley, CA 94703
(800) 644-2666
http://www.lookingglass.org
Long Island teen claims Penn State fraternity member beat him for being gay: 'Don't let a frat guy know that you're gay'

BY MELISSA CHAN / NEW YORK DAILY NEWS / Updated: Tuesday, October 6, 2015, 4:00 PM

John Mateer, 19, claims he was assaulted by a member of a fraternity while visiting Penn State University.

A Long Island teenager claims he was brutally beaten by a fraternity member after revealing he was gay during a visit to Pennsylvania State University.

John Mateer, 19, posted photos on social media after the bloody attack Sunday, sparking outrage from thousands of supporters and a police probe into a possible hate crime.

"Don't let a frat guy know that you're gay," he wrote on Twitter. "I am bleeding on my phone."
Teen Claims Penn State 'Irat Guy' Attacked Him for Being Gay

The Wantagh, L.I., native studies at Queens College but was visiting Penn State over the weekend when he said he was targeted outside a fraternity house by a man who outwardly said he hated homosexuals.

"Got the living s— kicked out of me. The brother admitted that he hated gays. Proceeded to kick the s— out of me." Mateer said on Twitter.

The teen received an outpouring of support after his tweet was shared more than 12,000 times since Sunday.

"This has brought me to tears," one Twitter user wrote. "I can't describe how disappointed I am. No one deserves this."

"This is disgusting," another said. "I am so sorry that you had to go through this just for being yourself."

Penn State condemned the alleged attack in a statement Tuesday.

"Violence in any form is repulsive and hurtful, and those responsible should and will be held accountable for their actions," the statement said.

The suspect was identified late Monday and is not a Penn State fraternity member, the State College Police Department said. Officials did not release his name.

Authorities say they are not investigating the incident as a hate crime.

Mateer did not immediately...
NYC's first public grad film school open its doors

JENNIFER FERMINO
NEW YORK DAILY NEWS  10/06/2015 5:10 PM ET

Mayor Bill de Blasio made the opening remarks at the new Barry R. Feirstein Graduate School of Cinema at CUNY Brooklyn’s first publically funded cinema graduate program in the city.

Lights, camera, study.

The city's first public graduate school of cinema opened its doors Tuesday, which officials say will help New York remain at the center of the film biz while opening up the industry to students who can't afford pricey private schools.

The Barry R. Feirstein Graduate School of Cinema – named after the former hedge-funder whose $5 million gift started the school – is located at Steiner Studios, a working film lot at the Brooklyn Navy Yard.

The inaugural class features 69 students, about half of which are women – welcome news in a
male-dominated academic path.

"We are unlocking the door of opportunity for a talented and diverse group of students who want to get the best, most cutting-edge education in cinema, and then put those skills to use right here in New York City," Mayor de Blasio said.

In-state tuition is $59,000 over three years. Private grad schools often exceed $150,000.
Homo naledi: How ancient hands and feet shed light on human evolution

Scientists studied hundreds of bones of the recently discovered early human Homo naledi to find that our relative had modern abilities, like walking and tool use, and primitive ones, like tree climbing.

By Lonnie Shekhtman, Staff (https://twitter.com/LonnieShekhtman)
| OCTOBER 6, 2015

More details have trickled out this week from scientists studying the 1,850 fossil bones of Homo naledi, a newly discovered human relative unearthed in a South African cave. They provide more insight into how modern humans descended from the trees and evolved to walk upright, bearing tools in their hands.

In a pair of papers published online in Nature Communications this week, an international team of researchers studying the function of H. naledi's hand and foot, based on hundreds of bones recovered in a cave in 2013, describe a mix of primitive and modern features not seen before among fossils from the human, or Homo, genus.

This week's findings show that H. naledi's hands and feet were well adapted for both modern functions, such as walking upright and using tools, and for primitive ones, such as climbing trees.

Recommended: Are you scientifically literate? Take our quiz (/Science /2011/1209/Are-you-scientifically-literate-Take-our-quiz)

"It shows we have a much greater diversity in the fossils of human ancestors (http://www.theguardian.com/science/2015/oct/06/ancient-human-
relative—could walk on two feet, use tools, and swing in trees) than we thought possible," Tracy Kivell, a paleoanthropologist from the University of Kent who's part of the team studying the bones, told the Guardian.

For example, in studying 15 hand bones, plus a nearly complete hand—a rarity in the fossil record—Dr. Kivell and her team found that the structure of *H. naledi*'s wrist and thumb is similar to ours and those of our extinct cousins, the Neanderthals. This indicates that the species would have had the dexterity to make and use tools, although no tools have been found.

But *H. naledi* also had longer finger bones than other hominins, an ideal feature for grasping limbs while climbing and suspending from trees.

"That combination was really quite surprising," Dr. Kivell told the Guardian. "It shows you can have a hand that is quite specialized for manipulation and tool use in a species that is still using its hands for climbing, and moving around in the trees or on rocks."

Its feet, based on 107 bones, are also similar to modern humans, formed for long-distance walking. But the toe bones are slightly curved, an indication that *H. naledi* could easily scale trees.

"It was unequivocally spending more time walking upright than not," William Harcourt-Smith, a researcher from the City University of New York who's studying *H. naledi*'s feet, told the Guardian.

"But you can imagine it spending time in the trees to gather fruit, or perhaps nesting in trees, or going there when there were predators around," he added.

*H. naledi* was first discovered by archaeologists (http://www.esmonitor.com/Science/2015/09/10/New-human-ancestor-discovered-in-South-African-graveyard) working in a South African cave called Rising Star in 2013. The discovery of the the bones in the cave was the largest one in Africa, made possible by scientists who squeezed through a 7½-inch wide crack and descended more than 400 feet to the Naledi chamber. There, exceptionally preserved, were fossilized bones of 15 different men and women—from newborns to elders.

Researchers don't yet know where *H. naledi* fits into our family tree, though they estimate the species to be 2.5 to 2.8 million years old (http://www.esmonitor.com/Science/2015/09/10/Ancient-burial-chambers-rattle-deep-questions-about-early-human-relatives-video), according to The Christian Science Monitor.

But until the bones can be dated, reports the Guardian, researchers don't know whether *H. naledi* lived in isolation millions of years ago, overlapped
with modern humans, or is a relative of a known human ancestor like *Homo erectus*.

"You can imagine this lineage emerging early on, close to the origins of the *Homo* genus, and hanging on for a long period of time," Dr. Harcourt-Smith told the Guardian. "But that's speculation. Evolution is messy. There is lots of experimentation going on, and lots of dead ends."
Studies Suggest Homo naledi Walked Upright and Climbed Trees


Homo naledi – an extinct species of hominin whose fossil skeletons were discovered in a South African cave and introduced to the world last month may have been uniquely adapted for both tree climbing and walking as dominant forms of movement, while also being capable of precise manual manipulation, according to two new studies published in the journal Nature Communications.
One of the studies, titled *The foot of Homo naledi*, suggests that although its feet were the most human-like part of its body, *Homo naledi* didn’t use them walk in the same way we do.

**Lead author Dr. William Harcourt-Smith** of CUNY’s Lehman College and the American Museum of Natural History and his co-authors describe the *Homo naledi* foot based on 107 foot elements from the Dinaledi Chamber (Chamber Stars) of the Rising Star cave, including a well preserved adult right foot.

They show the *Homo naledi* foot shares many features with a modern human foot, indicating it is well-adapted for standing and walking on two feet.

"However, it differs in having more curved toe bones (proximal phalanges)," the scientists said.

"*Homo naledi*’s foot is far more advanced than other parts of its body, for instance, its shoulders, skull, or pelvis," Dr Harcourt-Smith said.

"Quite obviously, having a very human-like foot was advantageous to this creature because it was the foot that lost its primitive, or ape-like, features first. That can tell us a great deal in terms of the selective pressures this species was facing," he said.

"This species has a unique combination of traits below the neck, and that added another type of bipedalism to our record of human evolution."

Because the *Homo naledi* fossils have not yet been dated, scientists don’t know how this form of bipedalism fits into our family tree.

"Regardless of age, this species is going to cause a paradigm shift in the way we think about human evolution, not only in the behavioral implications, but morphological and anatomical terms," Dr Harcourt-Smith said.
The Homo naledi hand and foot were uniquely adapted for both tree climbing and walking upright. Image credit: Peter Schmid / William Harcourt-Smith / Wits University.

Dr Tracey Kivell from the University of Kent, the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology, and the University of the Witwatersrand, led the second study, titled The hand of Homo naledi.

Dr Kivell and co-authors describe the Homo naledi hand based on nearly 150 hand bones, including a nearly complete adult right hand (missing only one wrist bone) of a single individual, which is a rare find in the human fossil record.

The hand of Homo naledi reveals a unique combination of anatomy that has not been found in any other fossil human before. The wrist bones and thumb show anatomical features that are shared with Neanderthals and humans and suggest powerful grasping and the ability to use stone tools.

However, the finger bones are more curved than most early fossil human species, such as Australopithecus afarensis, suggesting that Homo naledi still used their hands for climbing in the trees.

This mix of human-like features in combination with more primitive features demonstrates that the Homo naledi hand was both specialized for complex
tool-use activities, but still used for climbing locomotion.

“The tool-using features of the *Homo naledi* hand in combination with its small brain size has interesting implications for what cognitive requirements might be needed to make and use tools, and, depending on the age of these fossils, who might have made the stone tools that we find in South Africa,” Dr Kivell explained.

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W.E.H. Harcourt-Smith et al. 2015. The foot of *Homo naledi*. *Nature Communications* 6, article number: 8432; doi: 10.1038/ncomms9432

Tracy L. Kivell et al. 2015. The hand of *Homo naledi*. *Nature Communications* 6, article number: 8431; doi: 10.1038/ncomms9431
Homo Naledi, The Ancient Human Ancestors, Were Handy With Tools

Homo Naledi, one of the ancient human ancestors, could have been handy in using tools and walked more like a modern day human, say, scientists. They came to this conclusion after
examining the well-preserved hand bones and foot of fossils retrieved from a cave in South Africa. The hand and foot anatomy shared several characteristics with the modern day humans but also had some primitive traits that were useful in tree climbing, say the researchers.

Last month, scientists had announced the discovery of this species that was unknown previously in the human lineage, in a cave from Northwestern Johannesburg. A fresh insight has been provided by this new research into human evolution.

Tracy Kivell from Britain’s University of Kent, a paleoanthropologist said the fossil boasted a hand that is specialized for powerful and fine manipulation. The thumb and wrist bones showed features that were similar to modern humans and Neanderthals apart from indicating powerful grasping and ability to use stone tools.

As opposed to the straight fingers of the Neanderthals, the fossil presented fingers that were strongly curved which suggest that this species also used their hands regularly for climbing.

The foot was more like the modern day humans particularly in the anatomy of the ankle joint. The proportion of the region from the toes to the ankle and the presence of big toe with a no grasping formation add further credence.
Jeremy DeSilva, anthropologist from Dartmouth College stated that it was also well adapted for walking long distance and perhaps even for running. The legs were long and the knees resembled our own legs, the feet were also human like. He added further that the Homo Naledi walked much like us.

William Harcourt-Smith of Lehman College, CUNY stated that Homo Naledi was thought to have been more proficient in comparison to modern humans in the trees considering their toe bones and curved finger.

DeSilva added further that for decades, our science had known that walking upright, and bipedalism belonged to the period before brain enlargement in the course of evolution of humans. But, it was not so obvious any time before. The foot of Homo Naledi was strikingly close to the modern humans thought it had a brain about a third in size in relation to the modern day humans.

The age of the fossil, however, is yet to be determined. The research is also published in journal Nature Communications.
Foot fossils of human relative illustrate evolutionary 'messiness' of bipedal walking

Study of Homo naledi suggests that new species walked upright and also climbed trees

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY

A new study on Homo naledi, the extinct human relative whose remains were discovered in a South African cave and introduced to the world last month, suggests that although its feet were the most human-like part of its body, H. naledi didn't use them to walk in the same way we do. Detailed analysis of 107 foot bones indicates that H. naledi was well adapted for standing and walking on two feet, but that it also was likely comfortable climbing trees. The work, published in Nature Communications today with a concurrent study on H. naledi's hands, provides insight into the skeletal form and function that may have characterized early members of our genus.

"Homo naledi's foot is far more advanced than other parts of its body, for instance, its shoulders, skull, or pelvis," said William Harcourt-Smith, lead author of the new paper, resident research associate in the American Museum of Natural History's Division of Paleontology, and assistant professor at CUNY's Lehman College. "Quite obviously, having a very human-like foot was advantageous to this creature because it was the foot that lost its primitive, or ape-like, features first. That can tell us a great deal in terms of the selective pressures this species was facing."

Modern humans (Homo sapiens) and extinct species including Homo neanderthalensis, Homo erectus, Homo habilis, and Homo naledi are part of the Homo genus. The Homo genus and the Australopithecus genus (extinct, close relatives of Homo) are referred to as hominins.

Walking upright is one of the defining features of the human lineage, and as feet are the only structure that make contact with the ground in bipeds, they can tell us a lot about our ancient relatives' way of moving. In the Dinaledi Chamber of the Rising Star cave system in South Africa, the H. naledi excavation team recovered at least one specimen from almost every single bone in the new species' foot. These bones represent at least five individuals--two juveniles and three adults--including one nearly complete foot.

Analysis of these bones has shown that the foot bones look much more like human bones than chimpanzee bones, except for two major areas: the toes of H. naledi's foot were more curved and their feet were generally flatter than seen in the average modern human. Despite the close similarity in the foot structure, H. naledi likely did not walk exactly like us, the researchers say. Clues from other parts of its body--long and curved fingers, and a more ape-like shoulder joint--paint a picture of a creature that was undoubtedly bipedal but
also a tree climber.

"This species has a unique combination of traits below the neck, and that adds another type of bipedalism to our record of human evolution," Harcourt-Smith said. "There were lots of different experiments happening within hominins—it wasn’t just a linear route to how we walk today. We are a messy lineage, and not just in our skulls and our teeth. We’re messy in the way we moved around."

Because the *H. naledi* fossils have not yet been dated, researchers don’t know how this form of bipedalism fits into our family tree.

"Regardless of age, this species is going to cause a paradigm shift in the way we think about human evolution, not only in the behavioral implications—which are fascinating—but in morphological and anatomical terms," Harcourt-Smith said.

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Ancient Human Ancestor Homo Naledi Could Use Tools, Was a Versatile Traveler

In a pair of parallel studies on an ancient human ancestor's hands and feet, researchers determined Homo naledi was a versatile traveler.

According to BBC News, the scientists published two papers in the journal Nature Communications detailing the remains of the ancient human ancestor that were found in a cave in South Africa - one on naledi's hands and the other on its feet. The hands and feet indicate naledi traveled on foot and could also climb trees.

"Homo naledi's foot is far more advanced than other parts of its body, for instance, its shoulders, skull, or pelvis," William Harcourt-Smith, an assistant professor at CUNY's Lehman College who led the study on naledi's foot, said in a press release. "Quite obviously, having a very human-like foot was advantageous to this creature because it was the foot that lost its primitive, or ape-like, features first. That can tell us a great deal in terms of the selective pressures this species was facing."

Like modern man and the late Neanderthal, naledi could also fashion and use tools.

"The features that we see particularly in the wrist, we've only ever found in Neanderthals and [modern humans], and we know that those are committed to using tools," Tracy Kivell, a Kent University researcher who led the study on naledi's hand, told BBC News.

"They make tools, complex tools, and use them all the time, enough so that it's actually changed their morphology.

"Perhaps naledi was using tools that were made out of different materials or doing some other forceful, precision-grip manipulations, but the most straight-forward explanation is that naledi is making and using tools."